# Accountability - Transcript

Due to recent events many organizations have been tossed into managing a mobile workforce. However, The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has long known that work is something you do, not somewhere you go.

Previously we discussed how a one-on-one is a critical event in a supervisor and worker's work week. This event allows a supervisor to discuss current caseload issues, set weekly goals, and follow up to make sure they're reached. It is the last action, following up, that is even more critical in a mobile environment. One of my favorite sayings is "you don't get what you expect, you get what you inspect." Just the simple act of documenting a commitment in a conference note does improve the chance that it will be completed. But when you actually follow up each week to see if the activity has been completed with your team member is much more likely that they will take the required action.

Here is an example,

A member of your team has three cases that have been pending closure for the last three weeks. All these cases need is a final call to check on something and if the item is in place, and then the cases can be closed. You know the worker has a lot on their plate as they have had some extra intakes over the last few weeks. But every time you look on their caseload, there are those same three cases pending closure. What can you do?

First, during your weekly one-on-one, which we discussed a few weeks back, point out the need for the cases to be closed and let them know that you'll be asking about them next week. Just this act may result in the cases being closed. However, when you actually do ask the next week, and reinforce the need for the cases to be closed, your worker now knows you are tracking these cases and will be asking again the next week. Because of the act of following up once, they are now significantly more likely to closing these cases. You see, when they thought no-one was paying attention, these relatively stable cases were not critical enough to make it to their daily task list because of other activities that were considered "more important." But now that they know you will be asking, closing these cases becomes more urgent and they're more likely to be completed.

Another accountability tool is caseload data. Data driven management is often the key to effectively managing a mobile unit. Not every location has data available, but if data is available, it can provide insight into where there may be a problem. It's important to remember that data is an indication of a problem and not the problem itself. I often tell a story about using data early in my career. I had a staff member that had a validity rate about 50% lower than any of my other workers. While most validity rates floated around 66 to 70%, hers was consistently about 25%. The first week after I noticed this we had a conversation and I advised the rate needed to increase. The next month it was still at about 25%. We visited again, I pointed out the difference between her validity rate and everyone else's and advised that hers needed to improve. The next month, no change. We visited a third time and I explained that if the rate did not improve, I would be initiating corrective action. Anyone want to guess what her validity rate was for the next month. 100% percent and it remained 100% until we allowed her to be successful elsewhere.

What was the real problem? I don't know; I was so focused on the data that I never spent time looking at the actual cause of the low validity rate.

I am going to pause for 15 seconds and allow you to think about an answer to a question. What could have been the root cause of a low validity rate in her investigations?

It could have been a number of things. She may not have known how to conduct a thorough interview. She may not have had the people skills needed to establish rapport and trust with clients which prevented them from opening up with their concerning or issues. She could have simply been lazy.

The lesson, data is a great tool for indicating there is an issue. However, it will seldom tell you what the issue is. That may require ride-a-longs, client interviews or slanted case readings.

Accountability is an important aspect of supervision in any environment, but especially in a mobile environment. Research indicates that almost everyone will take advantage of working remotely. Having specific goals and ensuring these goals are reviewed weekly during one-on-ones helps increase the likelihood that team members stays focused on the client and their outcomes in a mobile environment.

This podcast has been produced by the Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence, the training department of Family and Protective Services in Texas. Music provided by Shane Ivers from Silverman Sound Studio. The music is provided at a cost that really even a state agency can afford. That's right, it was free. Thanks Shane.

This is Michael Curtis and from all of us at the Center for Learning and Organizational Excellence in Texas, have a great day.